

Part X

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The preceding broadsides have given the reader an insightful look at how our public library has developed over the last one hundred years. From a room in Thalian Hall, the library has



The library in 1906 and in 2000



expanded to a major downtown facility, three branches, and a law library served by a 50-member staff .

The dramatic increase in the number and size of library buildings is only one part of the library's growth. In addition:

- We now have over 100,000 registered borrowers, which is more than three times the number of people living in New Hanover County one hundred years ago.



From card catalog to computer catalog



- In 1906, the library opened with a collection of 1,700 books; the library now has over 400,000 items in its collection.
- Circulation of library books in our first decade averaged about 25,000 items a year. Today the library annually circulates over one million books and audiovisual materials.

- In 2006, 2,000 visitors daily walk through library facilities—a ten-fold increase from 1906.

- Today, library staff answer over 600,000 questions each year—a statistic not deemed important enough to track in 1906.



Today, electronic resources supplement traditional books



- Finally, today's public library provides a wealth of services not even imagined 100 years ago. Audiobooks, electronic journals, e-books, consumer health information, grant resources, digital photographs, Internet access, etc., are all part of a century of library progress.

Supporting this growth has been a significant increase in the library's budget. In 1906, the City of Wilmington appropriated \$1,200 to fund the operation of the library. In

2006, New Hanover County appropriates over \$3,500,000 including state and federal funds. On a per capita basis, the cost to operate our library system is less than that of most libraries in North Carolina.

An Increasingly Digital World

Having looked back at the last one hundred years, one inevitably begins to think about the next hundred years. Currently, library services are arranged around three factors: collections, staff, and facilities. This troika will continue into the future.



Resources such as WorldCat make library holdings universally accessible

Regarding collections, clearly the digital world will continue its advance, and all for the good, since the resources available on the Internet will continue to enrich all libraries. This is especially true in the area of reference collections and journals. In

both of these areas our library has been able to significantly enhance its



collections at little cost because of its association with NC LIVE, North Carolina's virtual library for public and academic libraries. The future will see increased funding for initiatives like NC LIVE

which provide an economy of scale while equalizing resources available to communities statewide—a fact that is very appealing to those who fund libraries. Audiovisual departments will also take increasing advantage of the many Internet options available to libraries to strengthen their collections.

A Smaller World

While print collections may grow at a slower pace, they will be better tailored to user needs through the increased sophistication of library computer systems. Customers will develop user profiles, and libraries will move from a passive role of holding collections to promoting the use of specific material to their users based on self-generated profiles.

NextReads provides suggested reading lists based on user preferences



We shall also see better integration of unique library resources such as our special collections and catalog within the worldwide web, and our users

will correspondingly come from all over the world—not just New Hanover County. In a global environment, paradoxically, local collections will increase in their importance, as public libraries become the natural repository for locally produced materials. New

Local history resources like the library's North Carolina Room will be widely used

